



Release date: August 7, 2000

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SECOND HANFORD WASTE SHIPMENT DEPARTS FOR WASTE ISOLATION PILOT PLANT IN NEW MEXICO

The second shipment of transuranic radioactive waste from the U.S. Department of Energy's (DOE) Hanford Site to the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP) in New Mexico left Hanford late today. The shipment includes forty 55-gallon drums of waste, transported in Nuclear Regulatory Commission approved shipping containers. The 1,800-mile trip, along a carefully planned, seven-state transportation route (Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Utah, Wyoming, Colorado, and New Mexico), is expected to take about 45 hours.

DOE's Carlsbad Office, which administers the National Transuranic Waste and WIPP programs, and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency have approved Hanford's waste characterization and shipping protocols.

The first shipment of transuranic waste departed from Hanford to WIPP on July 12. Hanford is the fourth DOE site to ship waste to WIPP, and will send an estimated 2,500 shipments (about 80,000 drums) of transuranic waste over the next 30 years. Transuranic waste consists of clothing, tools, tags, debris, residues, and other disposable items contaminated with radioactive elements, mostly plutonium. Once at the WIPP facility, the waste will be permanently disposed 2,150 feet beneath the ground in a bedded-salt formation below New Mexico's Chihuahuan Desert.

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Historical Note: The U.S. Department of Energy's Richland Operations Office manages the Hanford Site in southeastern Washington State. Hanford was established during World War II as part of the top secret Manhattan Project to produce plutonium for nuclear weapons. Weapons material production was halted in the late 1980s. The Hanford Site is now engaged in the world's largest cleanup effort to deal with the legacy of radioactive and hazardous wastes that resulted from the plutonium production era. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Washington Department of Ecology regulate Hanford's cleanup program under a long-term compliance contract called the Tri-Party Agreement. This agreement sets the framework and timelines on the cleanup work so that Hanford meets environmental standards. Hanford cleanup is focused on three outcomes: restoring the Columbia River Corridor for other uses, transitioning the Central Plateau to long term waste treatment and storage, and

preparing for the future.

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